DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 826 SP 016 014

AUTHOR	Shulkin, Sunny; And Others
TITLE	Teacher Skill Guide for Combatting Sexism. Module 4: Developing New Classroom Structures That Require Role Flexibility.
INSTITUTION	Education Development Center, Inc., Newton, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Women's Educational Equity Act Program.
PUB DATE	79
GRANT	G007605329
NOTE	28p.; For related documents, see SP 016 011-020.
AVAILABLE FROM	WEECN Publishing Center, Education Development Center, 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02160 (Package price for 13 Modules and Leader's Guide, $16.25).
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Behavior Change; Class Activities; *Class Organization; *Classroom Design; Classroom Techniques; Elementary Secondary Education; Inservice Teacher Education; Role Perception; *Sex Bias; Sex Fairness; *Student Behavior; Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This workshop module focuses on how teachers can structure situations and activities in their classrooms to encourage or require a much broader range of behaviors and skills than are usually called for. It is designed to increase teachers' awareness of the various structural elements that can be manipulated in a classroom, and the way in which these elements influence student behaviors and perceptions. It provides teachers with strategies for changing structural elements to encourage students to develop behaviors and characteristics that transcend sex stereotypes. (JD)

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TEACHER SKILL GUIDE FOR COMBATTING SEXISM

Module #4

Developing New Classroom Structures that Require Role Flexibility

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Women's Educational Equity Act Program
U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Office of Education

SP 016 014

TEACHER SKILL GUIDE FOR COMBATTING SEXISM

MODULE #4

Developing New Classroom Structures

that Require Role Flexibility

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MAY 9 1980

The activity which is the subject of this report was supported in whole or in part by the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the Office of Education should be inferred.

The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to Grant No. G007605329 under the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, U.S. Office of Education.

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Distributed and printed by Education Development Center, 1979
55 Chapel Street, Newton, Mass. 02160

CONTENTS

MODULE #4: DEVELOPING NEW CLASSROOM STRUCTURES THAT REQUIRE ROLE FLEXIBILITY

OBJECTIVES 1

SUGGESTED TIMING 1

WORKSHOP DESIGN

Activity I.	Course overview.	1
Activity II.	Introduction to the topic of classroom structures.	2
Activity III.	Newspaper bridges.	4
Activity IV.	Activity centers	5

WORKSHOP HANDOUTS

Handout I.	Classroom Structures	7
Handout II.	Making Sense of the Newspaper Bridge Activity.	8
Handout III. A.	Activity Center One.	10
Handout III. B.	Activity Center Two.	11
Handout III. C.	Activity Center Three.	12
Handout III. D.	Activity Center Four	13
Handout III. E.	Activity Center Five	14
Handout III. F.	Activity Center Six.	16
Handout IV.	Making Sense of the Activity Centers	18

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: A BOOKLET FOR PARTICIPANTS TO USE WITH THEIR STUDENTS

Approach A.	Analyzing Structural Elements in Your Classroom.	21
Approach B.	Focusing on Sex-Role Flexibility	21

MODULE #4: DEVELOPING NEW CLASSROOM STRUCTURES THAT REQUIRE ROLE FLEXIBILITY

OBJECTIVES

*To increase participants' awareness of the various structural elements that can be manipulated in a classroom, and the way in which these elements influence student behaviors and perceptions

*To provide participants with strategies for manipulating structural elements in the classroom so as to encourage a wide variety of student behaviors and characteristics that transcend sex stereotypes

SUGGESTED TIMING

	Activity	Suggested Time
I.	Course overview	10 minutes
II.	Introduction to the topic of classroom structures	10 minutes
III.	Newspaper bridges	45 minutes
IV.	Activity centers	105 minutes

WORKSHOP DESIGN

Activity I. Course overview

Objective

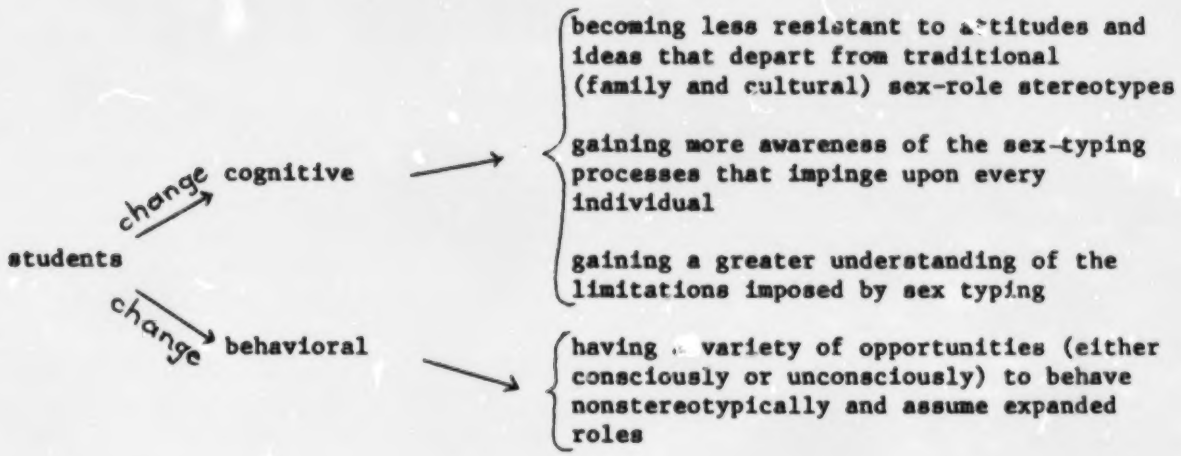
*To clarify the overall goals of the course, placing this workshop within the established perspective

A. To the leader:

1. Present a brief review of the overall goals and scope of the course, such as the following:

"The ultimate goal of this course is to help you encourage your students to become fuller, more adequate human beings--especially by liberating them from traditional sex-role limitations. Each workshop and all of the classroom activities you implement are directed toward ways that can help your students expand their attitudes, feelings, and behaviors and develop new capacities.

"Change can occur along two different dimensions: the cognitive and the behavioral. The following model represents these change processes:


students
change
cognitive
becoming less resistant to attitudes and ideas that depart from traditional (family and cultural) sex-role stereotypes
gaining more awareness of the sex-typing processes that impinge upon every individual
gaining a greater understanding of the limitations imposed by sex typing
change
behavioral
having a variety of opportunities (either consciously or unconsciously) to behave nonstereotypically and assume expanded roles

"In addition, your students will be equipped to continue behaving in nonstereotypic ways in the future because you will help them develop an internal support system that they can rely on when the external support system--your classroom--is no longer readily available."

2. Ask participants to think about issues or questions they might have concerning further clarification of course objectives. You can deal with questions in two ways:
   a. Have participants submit questions to you in writing. Review them and respond to them during the next scheduled workshop.
   b. Allow participants to ask questions now, during a time-limited question and answer session.

Activity II. Introduction to the topic of classroom structures

Objectives
*To present an expanded view of the structures that operate within every classroom
*To help participants learn to vary systematically or manipulate classroom structures so that students can develop a wide range of skills

A. To the leader:
1. Present a brief lecture, such as the following:

"I would like to provide some background for this module on structural elements in the classroom. The ultimate goal of this course is to help students expand their repertoires of skills and ways of behaving. This course is not at all suggesting that women learn to be like men and men learn to be like women. Instead of simply reversing stereotypes, females and males should learn to exhibit a wide range of characteristics--those that are traditionally associated with the other gender as well as one's own gender--so that all people can operate flexibly and appropriately in varied situations. Eventually, the stereotypes we link to gender will fade out. Characteristics will no longer need to be defined as 'female' or 'male'; instead all of us will develop a rich, broad

range of capacities. This module focuses on how, as teachers, we can structure situations and activities in our classrooms to encourage or require a much broader range of behaviors and skills than are usually called for. This will provide students with systematic, planned opportunities to develop a broader range of personal behaviors and skills.

"To begin, I'd like to compare a teacher with an architect. When an architect designs a building, she or he has many different variables to manipulate: lighting, materials, textures, shapes, heights, sounds, colors. Decisions about each of these variables have dramatic effects on how people feel about the resulting building and how they function within it. Imagine that you walk into a stark building that has only sharp edges, concrete block walls, a loud air conditioner, hard chairs, and drab brown or gray furniture. Such a place would generate certain feelings and activities, making other feelings and activities nearly impossible. For most, such a room would be hopeless as a comfortable setting for psychotherapy. Imagine instead that the architect has created a building without corners or sharp angles and has filled it with large pillows and cozy cubbies. Such a place would have markedly different effects on the people within it.

"An architect, then, makes decisions about the structural elements in a building with an eye to evoking certain feelings. The same principle holds true for teachers. We manipulate many variables in our classrooms. Consciously or unconsciously, we make decisions about them everyday. In this module, I want to make explicit the range and nature of classroom structures. Then, we will all explore ways to vary structural decisions consciously, so that we encourage a much broader range of student behaviors. If students have the opportunity, within your classroom, to behave in a great variety of ways, they will carry their expanded behavioral repertoires with them into the world.

"Another way to use the architect analogy is to imagine an architect who varies only one or two structural elements, thus greatly limiting other design possibilities. For instance, imagine an architect who varies only size and shape, but keeps all other elements unchanged: color, texture, materials, lighting. In a similar way, teachers can vary too few classroom structures, thus limiting the variety and richness of experiences to which their students are exposed. The two classroom variables that tend to be manipulated most often are content and time.

"In a lecture situation, there aren't too many variables that you can maneuver. Once you make a decision to lecture, content does become a major consideration, but you might also consider organization, pace, seating arrangements that maximize eye contact with students, and the proportion of assertions by you to questions posed to the group.

"Overall, there are relatively few ways to vary the classroom situation during a lecture so as to encourage different student behaviors. However, there are many other classroom situations that offer almost limitless possibilities.

"I will be distributing a list of structural elements for you to consider. This is not a definitive list; you will certainly think of

others. I am presenting these as one set of classroom structures that you--as teachers--can make decisions about, deliberately and consciously in order to encourage varied and flexible student roles and behaviors.

2. Distribute Handout I, "Classroom Structures" (see page 7) to all participants.
   a. Ask participants to read through the list of classroom structures with you.
   b. Allow participants to ask clarifying questions.

Activity III. Newspaper bridges

Objective

*To have participants experience, through a complex activity, the ways in which structural elements can be arranged to encourage specific skills and feelings

A. To the leader:

1. Introduce this activity by defining its structural elements:
   a. Content--Participants will be working on a building task that requires interpersonal cooperation and team effort.
   b. Task--The task will be to work as a group to build a bridge, using only the materials that are provided by the leader. The finished bridge must be tall enough to allow a brick to pass under it and strong enough to support a brick that is laid on top of it.
   c. Materials--The only materials that participants may use are newspapers and masking tape. (Note: these materials should be provided by the workshop leader.)
   d. Groupings--Participants will work in self-selected small groups of five or six members. Each small group should represent a range of teaching levels and interest areas. Group composition by sex and race is arbitrary.
   e. Time--The total time for this activity will be 20 minutes. First, each group will spend ten minutes discussing the task and formulating a plan for building their bridge. Then, each group will spend ten additional minutes implementing their plan by actually building their bridge. Absolutely no talking is permitted during the building phase.
   f. Maintenance--The principal ground rule is that of total silence during the building phase of the activity. Each group is responsible for maintaining this rule.
   g. Leadership--This element is random.
   h. Mode of operating--The task requires active interdependence.
   i. Physical space--Groups should find a comfortable area of floor space to accommodate themselves.
   j. Mode of expression--During the planning phase of the activity, there will be active involvement in group discussion. During the building phase, participants will express themselves via active involvement in the construction of their bridge.
   k. Goals--The goals of this activity have been established in advance by the course leaders.
   l. Evaluation--There is an external, objective standard of success, that has been set in advance by the leader: that each bridge be tall enough to enable a brick to pass under it and strong enough to hold a brick that is laid on top of it.

B. Begin the activity
   1. Have participants form small work groups.
   2. Distribute building materials.
   3. Instruct participants to begin their task, following all of the structural guidelines.
   4. Be sure to call the time out loud so that all participants know when to plan and when to build.
   5. Evaluate each group's bridge to determine if it successfully meets the specifications for height and strength. Encourage participants to watch and react to all of the evaluations.

C. Making sense of the newspaper bridge activity
   1. Distribute Handout II, "Making Sense of the Newspaper Bridge Activity" (see pages 8-9) to all participants.
   2. Instruct participants to begin working through the handout questions, first alone and them with the other members of their small group.

Activity IV. Activity centers

Objectives
*To increase participants' awareness of the different kinds of classroom structures that can be manipulated toward various ends
*To clarify the ways in which different classroom structures can be used to encourage or discourage specific student behaviors and characteristics

A. To the leader:
   1. Introduce the activity briefly:
      "Each of you will be assigned to a small group, and each group will be assigned to one of six activity centers. Each center involves a different kind of task. Also, each center stresses different structural elements; this is, I've tried to vary the elements that operate in each center according to my perceptions of the ways in which such structures can influence the outcome of each activity. After you've been assigned to your center, you'll be asked to do the activity, then reflect on the influence of the activity's structural elements. Finally, you'll share what happened at your center with the members of another small group."
   2. Have participants count off (from one to six) to form six small work groups.
   3. Distribute handouts with activity center instructions, one set per group. This is, the first small group receives Handout III A, the second small group receives Handout III B, and so on until the sixth small group receives Handout III F.
   4. Instruct members of each small group to read and follow the instructions for their activity center. Allow 20 minutes for this.
   5. Have two small work groups get together for sharing and demonstration. Form pairs of groups as follows:
      a. activity center one with activity center two.
      b. activity center three with activity center four.
      c. activity center five with activity center six.
   6. As groups one, three, and five require an audience, they will be performing their activity center task for the members of their partner

group. Groups two, four, and six do not require an audience; they will simply be explaining their activity to the members of their partner group.

7. Distribute a copy of Handout IV, "Making Sense of the Activity Centers" to each participant (see page 18). Have participants work through this handout and then discuss the questions it raises in their small groups.
8. Gather all participants together into one large group for a sharing session. Ask for volunteers to report the learnings of each of the small groups, focusing their reports on this questions:

   Having listened to the experience of everyone in your group, can you make two generalizations regarding the influence of specific structural elements on the outcome of your activity? In other words, which two structural elements seemed to allow or encourage which two behaviors, qualities, or skills?

Module #4: Handout I

CLASSROOM STRUCTURES

TIME - Is it limited or unlimited? Is it adequate or inadequate? Does it exert pressure? If so, to what degree?

LEADERSHIP - Is leadership designated or undesignated? Is it earned or assigned at random?

GROUPING - How are groups formed? How many members? What characterizes the group's composition?

MAINTENANCE - What are the classroom's ground rules and norms? How are they maintained?

MATERIALS - What kind of materials are available and in what amount?

MODE OF OPERATING - Are students operating in an active or passive mode? Are they dependent or independent? Are they cooperative or competitive?

CONTENT - What is the focus of the content area? Is it academic, personal, interpersonal, artistic, intellectual, etc.?

PHYSICAL SPACE - What defines the physical space within the classroom? Where are students working? Are they inside or out of doors? At desks, on a rug, or moving freely?

MODE OF EXPRESSION - How are students expressing themselves? Are they reading, writing, drawing pictures, acting out a scene, addressing the class, thinking introspectively?

GOALS - Who sets the goals? The teacher or the students? Individually or in groups?

TASK - What is the actual assignment?

EVALUATION - Who sets evaluation standards? The teacher or the student or the class as a whole? Are they subjective or objective? Are they known ahead of time or imposed afterwards?

Module #4: Handout II

MAKING SENSE OF THE NEWSPAPER BRIDGE ACTIVITY

A. Working by yourself, take stock of your own actions and reactions during the newspaper bridge activity.
   1. Specifically, what did you do during the planning time? During the building time?

   2. What were you thinking to yourself about yourself?

   3. How were you feeling?

   4. What skills and capacities did you have a chance to use?

B. Now, with your group, inventory all the various skills, feelings, behaviors and characteristics that people exhibited during the newspaper bridge activity. (Don't expect that everyone in your group reacted similarly!) As you inventory, consider whether anyone exhibited the following characteristics and skills:

sensitivity	persuasion	perception
power	timidity	ingenuity
aggression	competence	strong will
assertiveness	nurturance	determination
passivity	helpfulness	stubbornness
insecurity	supportiveness	resourcefulness
compliance	inarticulateness	creativity
curiosity	competitiveness	knowledge
uncertainty	obedience	silliness
cooperation	thoughtfulness	playfulness
articulateness	open-mindedness	dexterity

C. Examine each structural element of the activity. With the others in your group, discuss the degree to which each element allowed for, encouraged or discouraged specific behaviors, skills and characteristics.

Structural element	its consequences
Time	
Physical space	
Grouping	
Maintenance	
Materials	
Mode of operating	
Leadership	
Content	
Task	
Mode of expression	
Goals	
Evaluation	

Module #4: Handout III A

ACTIVITY CENTER ONE

Task:

As a group, read the story, "The Three Little Pigs." Using any of the materials in the room as props, rehearse and prepare to perform a play based on the story, or a new version of the story. You have twenty minutes in which to prepare. You may not need all of this time but use all of your group time in the best way possible. At the end of the twenty minutes, you will perform in front of one other small group.

The elements that are potentially important in this activity include:

MODE OF EXPRESSION: Play acting, creative

TIME: 20 minutes with urging to use all the time

MATERIALS: Props are allowed

LEADERSHIP: Undesignated

Module #4: Handout III B

ACTIVITY CENTER TWO

Task:

In the newspaper bridge activity, it was necessary for you to cooperate with one another in order to complete the task. Think about a time in your life when you were expected to cooperate (and you did or you didn't). If nothing comes to mind, think of a time when you hoped someone would cooperate with you (and they did or they didn't).

On a sheet of paper, write down all your thoughts and feelings as you remember this situation. Perhaps your thoughts will focus on insights you have about yourself in cooperative situations; perhaps your thoughts will be about expectations you have of yourself and others in cooperative situations; perhaps your thoughts will go to feelings of disappointment or feelings of delight.

The important thing is that you write nonstop for a period of fifteen minutes. Do not be concerned about finishing a sentence or spelling correctly. Just write down all your thoughts as they enter your mind.

This task is to be done in another room, away from others who might disturb you. You are each responsible for watching the time. At the end of fifteen minutes, get a partner, and share whatever you want to share. After five minutes of sharing, come back together as a small group.

The elements that are potentially important in this activity include:

CONTENT: Personal

PHYSICAL SPACE: Away from large group, working quietly by oneself

MODE OF EXPRESSIONS: Writing, introspection

MAINTENANCE: Writing must be free flow, nonstop

TIME: 15 minutes, writing
5 minutes, sharing

Module #4: Handout III C

ACTIVITY CENTER THREE

Task:

Divide yourselves into two debating teams.

One team will prepare to argue the case that: people should avoid paying taxes if they possibly can. The other team will prepare to argue the case that people should scrupulously pay all taxes.

Each debating team has twenty minutes to prepare an initial three-minute position. After each side presents its position, there will be time for a two-minute rebuttal by the other team. This debate will take place in front of one other small group.

During the first five minutes of preparation time, no single member of your debating team may speak twice until every member has had a chance to speak once. This applies to the preparation stage only; there are no fixed rules as to how many people can take part in the actual debate.

The elements that are potentially important in this activity include:

MAINTENANCE: During the first 5 minutes of preparation, no one member of the team may speak twice until each member has had a chance to speak once.

LEADERSHIP: Undesignated

MODE OF EXPRESSION: Debate

MODE OF OPERATING: Competitive

CONTENT: Intellectual

TIME: 20 minutes, preparation
3 minutes, presentation of position
2 minutes, rebuttal

Module #4: Handout III D

ACTIVITY CENTER FOUR*

Task:

Build ten different structures during the next twenty minutes (i.e., ten structures for the total group).

Make each structure as different from the others as you possibly can. You can use any of the materials allotted to you as well as any additional materials.

Work in any size grouping you wish. Be sure to use the entire twenty minutes allotted for this task.

The elements that are potentially important in this activity include:

MODE OF OPERATING: Active, independent, interdependent

GROUPINGS: Left to student choice

TIME: 20 minutes

MATERIALS: Unusual and unlimited

GOALS: Set by leader

*Note to the leader: It is necessary to provide this group with a variety of unusual building materials (plastic straws, marshmallows, string, etc.).

Module #4: Handout III E

ACTIVITY CENTER FIVE

Task:

During the first ten minutes of your group time, develop and try out a way to build group cohesion among yourselves.

At the end of ten minutes, do the task that follows. Do not read about your next task until a full ten minutes have passed. The success of your group cohesion plan will be evaluated by yourselves.

The elements that are potentially important in this activity include:

CONTENT: Interpersonal

LEADERSHIP: Undesignated

EVALUATION: Group evaluates itself

MODE OF EXPRESSION: Unspecified

TIME: 20 minutes, two 10-minute intervals

Task:

During the remaining ten minutes of your group time, outline a unit on auto repair that you might teach to a fifth grade class. You will present the highlights of your unit to another small group, for their evaluation of its interest and appropriateness.

The elements that are potentially important in this activity include:

TASK: Academic

LEADERSHIP: Undesignated

EVALUATION: By peers, implicit criteria for evaluation

Module #4: Handout III F

ACTIVITY CENTER SIX

Task:

During the first twelve minutes of your group time, develop and try out a way to build group cohesion among yourselves.

At the end of twelve minutes, do the task that follows. Do not read about your next task until a full twelve minutes have passed.

The elements that are potentially important in this activity include:

LEADERSHIP: Unassigned

CONTENT: Interpersonal

MODE OF EXPRESSION: Determined by the group

TIME: 20 minutes, one 12-minute interval, one 8-minute interval

Task:

During the remaining eight minutes of your group time, run sharing circles with your group, with each group member taking one turn as group leader and choosing a sentence starter (from the following list):

*A high I've had recently is _____.

*A low I've had recently is _____.

*When I'm in a group, one thing I need is _____.

*One thing I'd like this group to know about me is _____.

*When I enter a new group, I usually (talk about how you typically think, feel and behave) _____.

*One thing I appreciate that's happened in this group today is _____

_____.

The elements that are potentially important in this activity include:

LEADERSHIP: Assigned

CONTENT: Personal

MODE OF EXPRESSION: Sharing verbally

MAINTENANCE: Everyone gets a turn

Module #4: Handout IV

MAKING SENSE OF THE ACTIVITY CENTERS

*You were involved in a structured activity for 20 minutes. In that short period of time, what qualities, skills, characteristics were brought out by your group's task?

*Which structural elements encouraged which characteristics or skills in you?

*In your opinion, to what extent did the structure make room for qualities beyond those that you showed?

*If you were to remain in the same kind of activity over a longer period of time, what's your hunch as to the qualities, skills, or characteristics that would eventually emerge in you?

*Which ones do you wish would emerge?

*Imagine you had been given the assignment of your partner group. What guesses can you make about yourself in terms of the qualities, skills, characteristics that their activity's structure would have encouraged in you?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: A BOOKLET FOR PARTICIPANTS
TO USE WITH THEIR STUDENTS

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SUGGESTED ASSIGNMENT:

Select and implement either Approach A or Approach B.

APPROACH A: ANALYZING STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

*You will be using the grid on page 25 of this booklet.
*First, choose at least two classroom time periods or activities for your analysis, and note them in the spaces at the top of the grid.
*Decide who will be filling in the grid. You can do it yourself, or you can invite a colleague to volunteer the time required to visit your class and do it for you.
*During each of your selected time periods or activities, observe what happens in your classroom. Complete your grid by writing a one- or two-word description of how each structural element is operating. Also, make notes about any observable ways in which each structural element relates to sex-role flexibility.
*A sample grid:

Time period or activity #1: Free time, 11:45 to noon

TIME:	limited; no obvious influence on sex-role flexibility
LEADERSHIP:	undesignated; approximately equal numbers of girls and boys
GROUPINGS:	formed by students; results in predominantly same sex groupings
(etc.)	

*Consider the data on the grid you have filled in.
*Do you notice any elements of classroom structure that tend to encourage traditional sex roles? If so, how can you vary these elements to encourage sex-role flexibility?
*Devise a plan for varying key structures to encourage role flexibility. Implement your plan and make up a grid to gather data on its success. Discuss, in writing, what you did and what kinds of changes you helped achieve.

APPROACH B: FOCUSING ON SEX-ROLE FLEXIBILITY

*Find a few minutes of quiet time. Sit back and allow your classroom day to pass before your eyes. Focus on isolating specific instances of traditional sex-role behavior as they occur in your classroom.

For example: The day begins with homeroom, an open free period of classroom time. Girls and boys sit in separate groups and chat. Attendance is taken. Students are dismissed, row by row. Next comes your first period class. Students work in small groups. They are efficient and well-behaved. However, you notice that boys have been selected as leaders in every group. Girls have taken the role of secretaries.

*Focus on several of the instances you isolated when your students behaved very traditionally. Examine the use of classroom structures in each instance: How do they contribute to the stereotypical behavior you have observed?

For example: There are several structural elements which seem to contribute to the fact that boys become group leaders while girls become group secretaries. These include: free student choice of roles, no rotation of role responsibilities throughout a given activity, and a limited number of available role options.

*Consider ways in which you could manipulate various classroom structures to encourage greater sex-role flexibility.

For example: Some possibilities for altering the situation of boys as leaders and girls as secretaries include: randomly assigning the leadership role to girls as well as boys, making several additional roles available to group members (time keeper, navigator, good questioner) and emphasizing the value of each, and setting a norm that group members must take an unusual role on certain specified days.

*Now, implement your plan for encouraging sex-role flexibility. Be sure to write about what you've done and how well it seems to have worked.

CLASSROOM STRUCTURES: A GRID FOR SELF-ANALYSIS

Time period or activity #1 _____ Time period or activity #2 _____

TIME: _____

LEADERSHIP: _____

GROUPINGS: _____

MAINTENANCE: _____

MATERIALS: _____

MODE OF OPERATING: _____

CONTENT AREA: _____

PHYSICAL SPACE: _____

MODE OF EXPRESSION: _____

GOALS: _____

TASK: _____

EVALUATION: _____